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HISTORIC RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

Historic structures and their settings provide continuity with the past, establish a tangible sense of place, and enhance the aesthetic environment of the county. The preservation of historic resources was an issue raised in the 1979 and 1989 master plans and is equally relevant today. Baltimore County has preserved and still retains significant historic resources. Preserving significant districts, structures, and potential archeological sites is a county goal, because the economic and social value of the built environment relies significantly on the aesthetic contributions of historic resources. Nevertheless, part of our local heritage continues to be at risk because of continuing qualitative erosion caused by neglect, abandonment, or the intrusion of poor design and incompatible uses.

Master Plan 2010 proposes to improve upon existing efforts that safeguard the county's heritage. The county has embarked on an effort to catalogue and evaluate significant structures and sites, and to evaluate the adequacy of the local regulation governing historic resources, and these efforts should be continued. Currently, the basic types of protective historic designation are individual or district listing on the National Register of Historic Places, entry on the Baltimore County Landmarks List, or the enactment of a Baltimore County Historic District (Map 33).



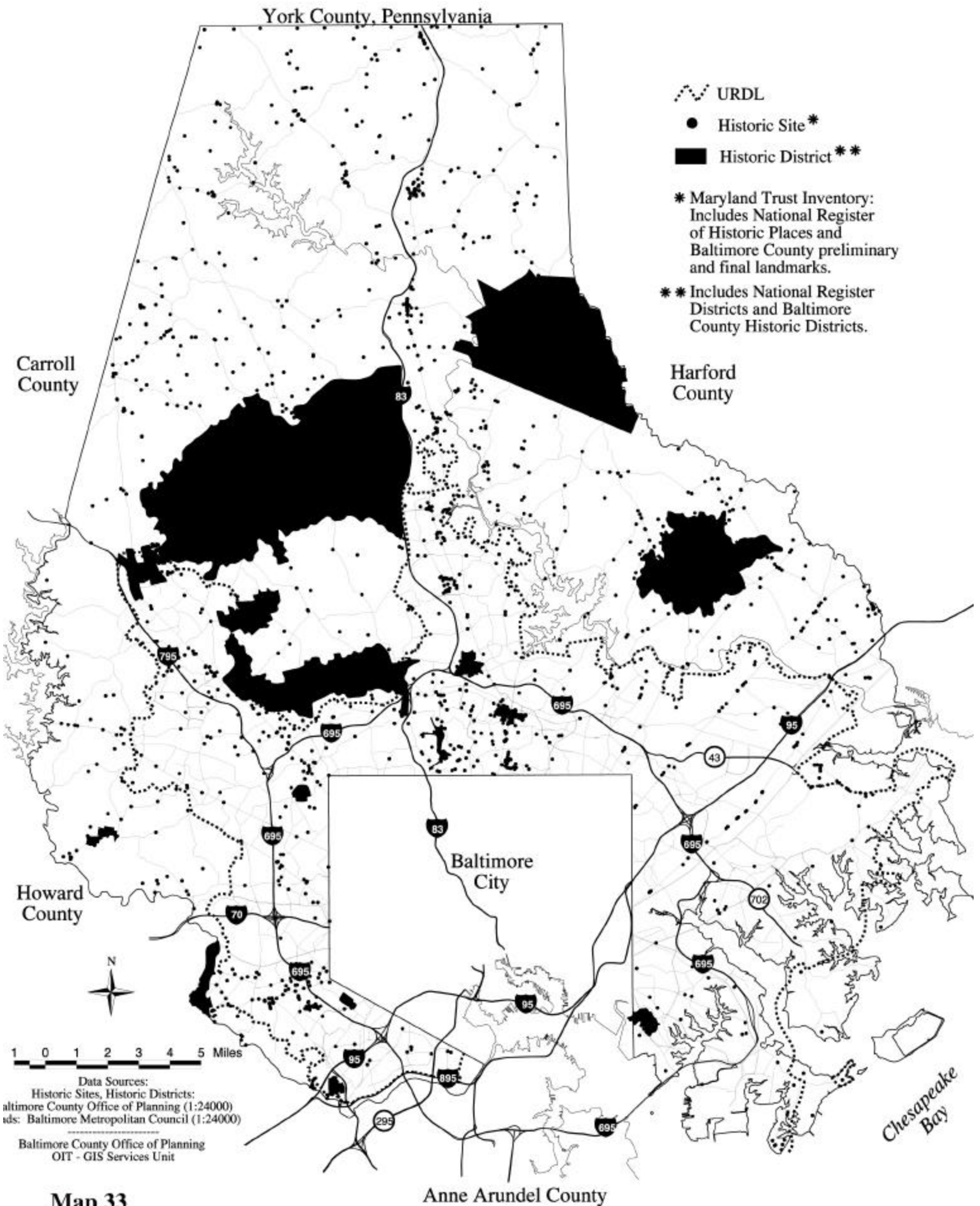
Through the 1966 Historic Preservation Act, the United States Congress created the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This was in response to a boom in urban renewal and highway construction that had resulted in the demolition of thousands of older buildings without any consideration of their value to the culture and heritage of the nation. The NRHP is a list of districts and individual properties protected through stringent reviews in the planning phases of federally funded projects. The listing also confers eligibility for federal tax incentives. Federal limitations do not apply to developers who do not use federal funds or incentives.

Historic properties significant to Baltimore County may also be protected by the use of the Baltimore County Districts or Landmarks Listings. The County Council, upon recommendation of the Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission, enacts these county designations. Established as a part of the county government in 1976, the Commission must review and grant approval regarding exterior changes to, or the demolition of, properties on the Baltimore County Preliminary or Final Landmarks Lists. It makes advisory comments on properties that are on the National Register and Maryland Historical Trust inventory. The preliminary list is an interim stage before the final enactment by the County Council; there are 169 structures currently on the final list.

In a Baltimore County Historic District, any exterior modification or addition, as well as any excavation, building, or demolition permit is subject to approval by the Commission. Significantly, the Commission's authority within a County Historic District also includes the site surrounding and adjoining the individual structures, which may be important in maintaining the sense of historic character. Nine local historic districts have been established. Under the county code, the agreement of the owners of 75% of the property within a proposed district's boundary is required to form a local historic district.



Many historic buildings have been protected by placement on the Baltimore County Landmarks List.



Map 33
Historic Districts and Sites

Historic preservation can provide a number of opportunities to enhance economic development and strengthen the local tax base, as well as to foster community identity and stability. The county should promote tax incentives that are available to the owners and developers of historic properties. Revised development regulations to foster cooperation between developers and preservationists are essential to improve the predictability of outcomes and streamline the development process.



POLICY

- Improve programs and procedures to preserve and maintain historic districts, structures, and their immediate surroundings.

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

To improve existing efforts that preserve county historic resources, issues that must be addressed include completing the inventory of historic sites; improving regulations to increase the effectiveness of existing protection programs; providing education about the economic benefits and social and cultural importance of our physical heritage; and facilitating the use of county, state, and federal tax credit programs.

Issue: Completing a Comprehensive Inventory of Historic Sites

Historical significance can arise from many factors and usually includes several in combination, including architectural quality; association with historic events or persons; uniqueness; or great age. “Context” is the term used to identify these geographic and/or functional relationships; it establishes the setting by which the degree of importance can be evaluated.

A full understanding of a property’s importance for the community’s present and future can only be achieved by knowing its place in the context of a complete inventory of all the remaining historic features in Baltimore County. A few parts of the county have already been systematically surveyed. The work performed during the past several decades on behalf of the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) is a valuable beginning and must be completed throughout the county. A countywide inventory of historic properties will have value for guiding county agencies and communities in making informed, defensible decisions, should motivate current owners toward stewardship, and would alert prospective buyers to the consequences of owning a part of the community’s heritage.



The historic importance of this home is heightened by its context within the Lutherville community.



Action

Complete a geographically and thematically comprehensive inventory of historic structures and potential historic districts.

As part of the comprehensive inventory:

- Compile criteria, using the state's Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan, federal standards, and related sources, for defining historic contexts and evaluating the significance of individual structures, sites, and districts;
- Consider the need for re-evaluation and/or further documentation of the nearly 2,900 Baltimore County entries currently on the MHT Inventory, including the possibility of defining different degrees of significance; and
- Develop additional surveys for other portions of the county to assess more fully their historic value for economic development plans.

County, state, and federal regulations seek to achieve the common goal of ensuring that historic resources are considered when changes to a property are contemplated. In some cases, those resources are required to receive special protective measures and approvals. The inventory, analysis, and development processes that lie within county government's control need to be clarified and integrated as well as updated to incorporate published standards to guide objective decision-making.

Actions

1. Publish a user-friendly brochure that clearly differentiates the various historic designations and explains the non-regulatory and regulatory implications of each including economic incentives such as tax credits. Either in this document or in a companion brochure, explain the sequence of steps and sources of information for complying with the regulatory aspects of each historic designation.
2. The Landmarks Preservation Commission and the Planning Board should formally adopt the procedures and standards they use for reviewing historic properties.
3. Review, improve, and clarify the county's basic historic preservation legislation. The review should be coordinated closely with the comprehensive inventory, especially the concepts of degrees of significance and the regulatory effects of the different types of historic designations. It should also seek to integrate procedures for timely, non-duplicative actions by the Landmarks Preservation Commission,

The county will review, improve, and clarify the county's basic historic preservation legislation.

the planning board, and other elements of the county's development-approval system. The legislation's relationship to state and federal requirements should also be considered.



4. Consider the creation of a historic planned unit development (PUD-H) process that would allow historic buildings in residential areas to be preserved through adaptive reuse.
5. Incorporate historic site locational data into the county Geographic Information System (GIS).
6. Consider reducing the threshold for property owner agreement on establishing a county historic district to the more customary 51% used by other municipalities.
7. Consider establishing more flexible permit standards for historic structures to increase their economic development potential through adaptive reuse.
8. Clarify the use of current historic preservation law regarding the renovation of historic structures and their compatibility with the neighborhood.

Issue: Providing Effective Non-Regulatory Programs

The greatest gains in historic preservation efforts are made when communities and homeowners themselves cultivate a culture of respect for the past and concern for posterity, which leads to voluntary preservation of historic resources. The county can nurture this co-operative culture by providing information and non-regulatory incentives.

Actions

1. Educate the public about the economic and social benefits of conserving and re-using historic properties, including details on available financing and technical assistance programs.
2. Evaluate the potential advantages of the following for community conservation, commercial revitalization, and rural protection areas:
 - property tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic residences and historic properties;
 - a system for transferring development rights from historic properties in commercial use to other commercial properties including planned unit developments; and
 - other innovative incentives.
3. Support Landmarks Preservation Commission efforts to provide assistance to individuals, businesses, and communities on the



The greatest gains in historic preservation efforts are made through voluntary preservation by neighborhoods or individuals.



conservation of historic resources, including creative use of funding from the Maryland Historical Trust and state and federal governments.

Issue: Historic Preservation in Commercial Areas

In commercial areas, development pressure is often severe. Because of the value of the land and the potential profit from developing a retail or office site, preserving a historic structure may not initially appear to be economically advantageous. However, there are commercial areas where historic structures provide irreplaceable character by creating a unique village atmosphere worthy of protection. Small business districts have been revitalized nationally by “main street” projects that rely heavily on historic preservation. The county should develop methods to enhance historic commercial areas.

Actions

1. Develop a program of design standards and related financial incentives for historic properties in designated commercial areas, which would apply to old and new development.
2. Consider a “transfer of development rights” program, which would separate the development potential from the historic site, thereby providing financial compensation to the owners of historic properties while still allowing development elsewhere.